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PUBLIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS SOCIAL CREATIVITY

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The article begins with an overview of the innovation process and the entrepreneurial process, each treated as separate but interrelated phenomena. The innovation process tracks the evolution of a new idea through time, whereas the entrepreneurial process tracks the activities that entrepreneurs develop to promote and defend the idea against its detractors. The model of innovation and entrepreneurship introduced distinguishes between individual and collective entrepreneurship and identifies two types of collective entrepreneurship: team entrepreneurship and functional entrepreneurship. A Minnesota case study demonstrates the power of both team and functional entrepreneurship. It also illustrates how important the linkages are between the entrepreneurs and their larger community. An innovative idea's development and survival depends on an "ecology of organizations" that provide "venture" capital for analysis and experimentation. The vast networks of contacts and associations represent a form of social capital just as important as the community's economic capital. In this case, both aspects of social creativity—the community resources and the network of social relations—were found to be instrumental in passing and implementing the first public school choice program in the country.

KEYWORDS: *Collective entrepreneurship, entrepreneurs, innovators, public entrepreneurship, public innovation, team entrepreneurship.*

Public entrepreneurship is defined as the development of a new idea and the nurturing of the idea throughout all phases of the innovation process—policy initiation, design, and implementation (Roberts and King, 1996). Occurring in the complex, shared power world of public bureaus, legislative arenas, and judicial fora, public entrepreneurship usually calls on the *collective efforts* of a large number of people. *Bureaucratic entrepreneurship*, for example, often links individuals who invent the new ideas with other members of the organization who champion and resource them during the later phases of policy implementation and evaluation. *Legislative entrepreneurship* pools the talents of policy intellectuals, who give life to new ideas, with support from elected officials and astute administrators, who defend the ideas against competing policy alternatives. *Judicial entrepreneurship*

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draws on the shared enterprise between appellate judges and litigants, who, through their collective efforts, craft new judicial interpretations and establish precedent-settings cases (Roberts, 1999).

Despite the collective character of public entrepreneurship, most of the research extols the virtues of individual entrepreneurs (Harris and Kinney, 2003; Mintrom, 1995; Schneider et al., 1995). We read of the larger-than-life exploits of public entrepreneurs who, despite all odds, take an innovative idea and move it into practice (Doig and Hargrove, 1987; Lewis, 1980). They are tenacious, highly creative, self-confident, hardworking, charismatic, decisive, energetic, persistent, and unconventional. They have a "capacity to engage in systematic rational analysis, an ability to see new possibilities offered by the evolving historical situation, and a desire to 'make a difference'—to throw . . . energies and personal reputation into the fray in order to bring about changes" (Doig and Hargrove, 1987, p. 11). Notable is their willingness to take considerable risks to push new ideas (Ramamurti, 1986; Kingdon, 1984).

Giving them their due, these individuals are remarkable for their vision, tenacity, and ability to make things happen. But the single-minded focus on the individual entrepreneur obscures the vast range of entrepreneurial behavior that is collective in nature and depends on a rich, supportive context in order to sustain the innovation process. Although we occasionally find references that underscore the importance of the collective effort and the entrepreneurial context in the public sector (Bardach, 1977; Eyestone, 1977; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993), collective entrepreneurship has yet to receive the same level of attention and focus as individual entrepreneurship. As a form of social creativity and an example of the contextual approach to understanding invention (Montuori and Purser, 1995), it has been least explored and understood. Consequently, the goal of this article is to explore the parameters of collective entrepreneurship and to illustrate how entrepreneurial creativity draws on the social context to fuel the innovation process.

The article begins with an overview of the innovation process and the entrepreneurial process, each treated as separate but interrelated phenomena. The innovation process tracks the evolution of a new idea through time, whereas the entrepreneurial process tracks the activities that entrepreneurs develop to promote and defend the idea against its detractors. The model of innovation and entrepreneurship that emerges enables us to distinguish between individual and collective entrepreneurship and identify two types of collective entrepreneurship: team entrepreneurship and functional entrepreneurship. A Minnesota case study demonstrates the power of both team and functional entrepreneurship. It also illustrates how important the linkages are between the entrepreneurs and their larger community. In this instance, a resource-munificent community provided a very rich base on which public entrepreneurs could draw. The idea's development and survival depended on an "ecology of organizations" that provided "venture" capital for analysis and experimentation. In addition, the case underscores the deft management of social relations both within the entrepreneurial team and between the team and its supporters. The vast networks of contacts and associations that the public entrepreneurs developed represented a form of social capital just as important as the community's economic capital. In this case, both aspects of social

creativity—the community resources and the network of social relations—were found to be instrumental in passing and implementing the first public school choice program in the country.

COLLECTIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

An understanding of collective entrepreneurship starts with a description of the innovation process. Innovation is the translation of a new idea from its initial state to its actualization in practice as a full-blown innovation. The innovation process begins with a new idea. The idea can be a new technology, a new service, a new product, or even a new administrative procedure (Daft and Becker, 1978). Classification of an idea as “new” depends on its context. An idea is considered to be new if it is perceived to be new by the relevant unit of adoption (Zaltman, et al., 1973, p. 10). Sometimes new ideas originate in a particular setting. In other instances, a new idea is adapted or even borrowed from another setting and then applied in the entrepreneur’s own context (Peltz and Munson, 1982).

The development of the *new idea* and the association of the idea with some need, problem, or concern, marks the first phase of the innovation process, often referred to as initiation or creation (Polsby, 1984; Roberts and King, 1996). Initiation is followed by the design phase that translates the idea into a more concrete and *tangible form* (such as a position paper, a prototype, or model). Completion of the design phase requires the approval of powerholders and gatekeepers whose resources and support are necessary to proclaim the new idea as *law, statute, or policy*. Implementation follows the design phase when the new idea is tested in practice to ascertain how well it functions. New ideas that survive implementation are described as *innovations*; ideas that do not survive are considered to be failed ideas (Roberts and King, 1996). Institutionalization is the final phase when the new idea becomes *accepted practice*. Thus, we can think of the innovation process consisting of a series of hurdles or transformations that move the new idea from an initial state to its final state. The horizontal dimension in Figure 1 represents the process graphically.¹

The vertical dimension in Figure 1 represents the entrepreneurial process. Entrepreneurs are the drivers and protectors of the innovative idea as it moves through time. They design and develop a set of activities in order to push the innovative idea forward. The range of their activities can be extensive depending on how well known the idea is, how much resistance there is to the idea, and the level of support the idea attracts. One way to think of the vertical dimension is to view it as representing the activity structure of the entrepreneurs. Table 1 illustrates the activity structure of a group of public entrepreneurs (as described in the case that follows) who were advocating radical policy change in the public schools. The activities can be subdivided into four basic categories: creative/intellectual activities, strategic activities, mobilization and execution activities, and administrative and evaluative activities. Each set of activities was developed collectively among the public entrepreneurs and used throughout the innovation process. Taken as a whole, they created a network of supportive relationships that protect the new idea,

Table 1
Activity Structure of Public Entrepreneurs

<i>Creative/Intellectual Activities</i>
1. Generate Ideas
*Invent new policy ideas
*Apply models and ideas from other policy domains
2. Define Problem and Section Solution
*Define performance gap
*Identify preferred solution alternative
3. Disseminate Ideas
<i>Strategic Activities</i>
1. Formulate grand strategy and vision
2. Evolve political strategy
3. Develop heuristics for action
<i>Mobilization and Execution Activities</i>
1. Establish demonstration projects
2. Cultivate bureaucratic insiders
3. Collaborate with high-profile individuals/elite groups
4. Enlist elected officials
5. Form lobby groups and coordinate efforts
6. Cultivate media attention and support
<i>Administrative and Evaluative Activities</i>
1. Facilitate program administration
2. Participate in program evaluation

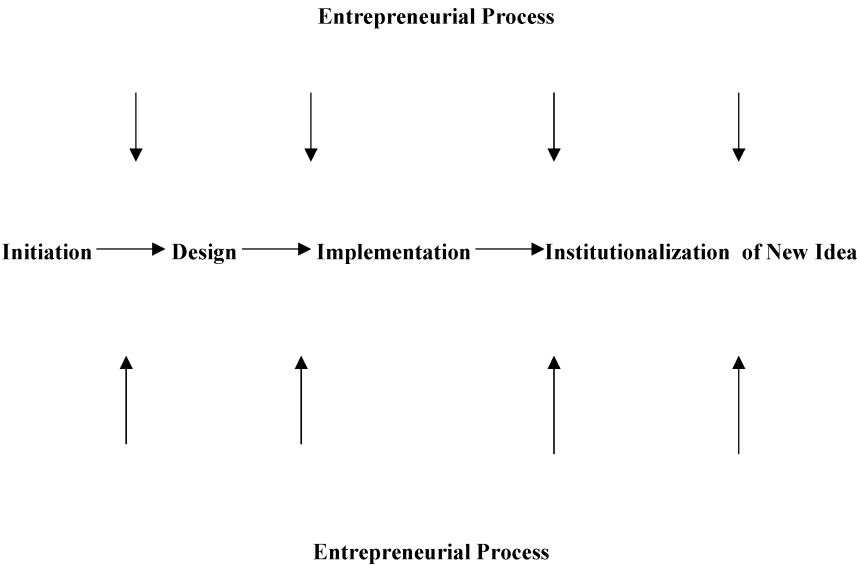


Figure 1. Conceptual map of the change process.

Innovative Idea with Few Arrows of Attack



Innovative Idea with Numerous Arrows of Attack

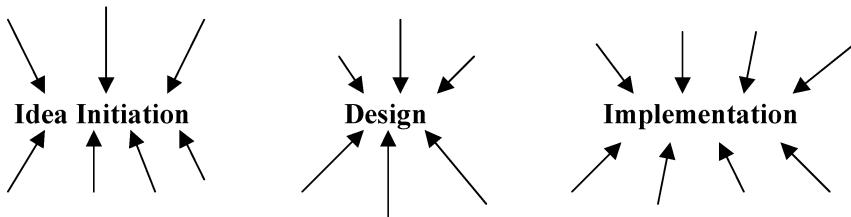


Figure 2. Innovative ideas with different levels of resistance.

defend it against its detractors, and nurture it through the vagaries of the innovation process.²

Roberts and King speculated that this field changes size depending on the level of resistance to the new idea (1996). As seen in Figure 2, a new idea that provokes little resistance, as represented by the “arrows of attack,” does not require a large amount entrepreneurial energy to sustain the idea on its innovation journey. People may be favorably disposed toward the idea or at least not willing to work toward its demise. There is less need for a large network of contacts, supporters, and resources because it takes little to convince people of the idea’s merits. On the other hand, as shown in the second diagram in Figure 2, if the new idea activates opposition as represented by the numerous arrows of attack, then a greater level of entrepreneurial energy would have to be generated to protect it. That is to say, we would expect a more complex relational pattern and network structure of entrepreneurial activity to sponsor the idea and to overcome the resistance to it. Viewed from this “energy perspective,” entrepreneurs are considered catalysts who create an energy field of relations to envelope and protect the innovative idea. The size of the relational field is expected to vary based on the level of challenge the idea provokes and the amount of entrepreneurial energy that is required to overcome it.

Taken together, the innovative idea vector and the entrepreneurial vector are interrelated. They work in tandem to produce innovation. The innovation vector tracks the various manifestations of the new idea (idea, prototype, innovation) as it moves through initiation, design, implementation, and institutionalization in the

policy process. The unit of analysis of the innovation process is the new idea. The entrepreneurial vector tracks the agents of change who galvanize support for and counter resistance to the innovative idea as it moves through time. The unit of analysis for the entrepreneurial process is the entrepreneur and the relational network of activities he or she develops in support of the innovative idea (Roberts and King, 1996).

This model provides several conceptual advantages. First, it enables us to distinguish between entrepreneurship and innovation. Although related, entrepreneurship and innovation are two different processes. Entrepreneurs are the necessary but not sufficient element for innovation to occur. Their creativity and initiative spark the development of new ideas. They are the catalysts that propel the innovative idea forward through the innovation process. At the same time, entrepreneurs fail or succeed to the extent their ideas attract support and resources from others. At some point, the innovative idea takes on a life of its own and has to be treated as separate from the entrepreneur who may have given it life. In fact, the ideal situation is when others begin to call the innovative idea their own. Thus, the entrepreneur and the innovative idea should be treated as two conceptually distinct entities.

The model also enables us to make finer-grained distinctions between individual and collective forms of entrepreneurship. Individual entrepreneurship relies on the exploits of a single individual who works through all phases of the innovation process. Acting independently, she generates a new idea, creates its design, and oversees its translation and implementation into practice. In contrast, collective entrepreneurship draws on multiple people to husband and shape an idea through initiation, design, and implementation into a full-blown innovation.

Probing collective entrepreneurship more deeply, we find its expression can take one of two forms: *team entrepreneurship* or *functional entrepreneurship* (Roberts, 1992; Roberts and King, 1996). As illustrated in the top diagram in Figure 3, *team entrepreneurship* occurs when multiple entrepreneurs join forces and work together to push an idea through *all* phases of the innovation process. Although each person is an entrepreneur in his own right, all decide it is more advantageous to pool their resources and act in concert with other entrepreneurs. The following case documents the work of six public entrepreneurs who cooperated through all innovation phases—creation, design, and implementation—and thus offers a good example of team entrepreneurship (Roberts, 1992; Roberts and King, 1996).

Functional entrepreneurship, on the other hand, as shown in the bottom diagram in Figure 3, occurs without the presence of a single entrepreneur. It occurs when experts from different functional areas of expertise coordinate their efforts and resources in order to push a new idea into practice (Roberts, 1992; Roberts and King, 1996). For example, *policy intellectuals* generate a new policy idea and defend it against alternative definitions and solutions to social problems. *Policy intellectuals* often work with *policy advocates* who extol the virtues of the idea because they believe it will solve some problem or meet some need. Policy advocates, in turn, serve as a bridge between policy intellectuals and *policy champions*—those who hold elected office. Capitalizing on their prestige, visibility, and resources, *policy champions* then introduce the idea to the public and work the seams of

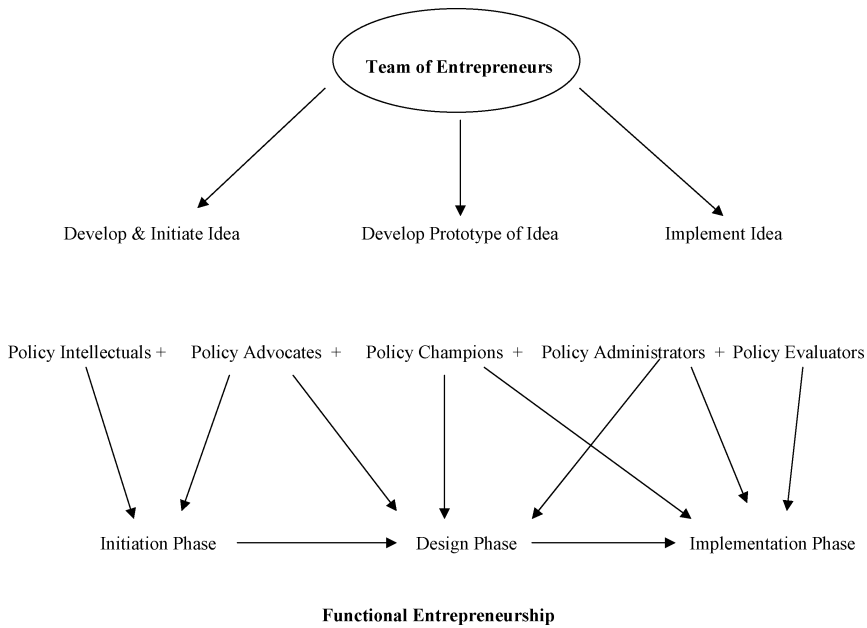


Figure 3. Collective entrepreneurship.

government to secure its expression in law, statute, or policy. Once the new idea is established in law, statute, or policy, *policy administrators* then recommend ways to implement it and increase its acceptance into the field. Finally, *policy evaluators* can suggest appropriate means to ensure the idea receives a fair review based on its merits. In the case that follows, we also see evidence of functional entrepreneurship when functional specialists (policy advocates, policy champions, policy administrators, and policy evaluators) joined forces with the team of policy entrepreneurs to coordinate efforts and move the new idea from one phase of the policy process to another. Thus, in this case example, we also find evidence of functional entrepreneurship.³

CASE OF COLLECTIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP—MINNESOTA PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE

A new idea surfaced in Minnesota known as public school choice or open enrollment. Its development can be traced to the late 1970s and early 1980s as a group of individuals (later to be identified as six public entrepreneurs) began meeting informally with educators and other change agents to discuss their concerns about the declining quality of Minnesota and U.S. education. The aim of the idea was to give parents the opportunity to send their children to school districts better suited to their children's needs. Rather than choosing districts based on a real estate decision, parents would be allowed, indeed encouraged, to choose a district based on

student requirements and the learning needs of each child. The idea was eventually known as “public school choice.”

The idea of public school choice was honed and shaped over a number of years. The rationales to support it attracted a diverse audience of parents, educators, politicians, business people, policy intellectuals, and advocacy groups. As the idea circulated in the policy community, its proponents grew in number. Eventually the public entrepreneurs were successful in catching the attention of Governor Perpich who became the idea’s ardent champion. Joining forces with the public entrepreneurs, the governor introduced the new idea to a skeptical public and legislature in January 1985. The bill, entitled *Access to Excellence*, launched the critical design phase of the innovation process.

Rancorous debates in the press and the legislature followed the idea’s introduction. Traditional educational groups opposed the legislation and fought vigorously against it. Thanks to vocal and energetic public entrepreneurs and supporters, the new idea did manage to gain a following. By June of 1985, one aspect of the governor’s original bill managed to survive a joint legislative conference committee. Signed into law as the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act (1985), it allowed high school juniors and seniors to attend Minnesota colleges of their choice, receiving both high school and college credit at state expense.

The Commissioner of Education, Ruth Randall, immediately introduced the new idea (as law) to the state school districts. The public entrepreneurs assisted her in the implementation process by providing support for mass mailings and district follow-ups. Thus began the implementation phase of the innovation process. Concerned that the new law be given a fair hearing and test, implementers also sponsored an evaluation study to track the outcomes of the new law, calling on students to describe their experiences and testify before the legislature. When reports were laudatory, efforts to gut the law were checked, at least in the short run.

The success of postsecondary enrollment for juniors and seniors, a subset of the governor’s controversial bill, fueled interest in expanding the law throughout the K–12 educational system. Over the next three years, variants of the idea of public school choice cycled and recycled through their own initiation, design, and implementation phases. Thanks to waves of successful legislation (the Voluntary K–12 Enrollment Options Act, the High School Graduation Incentives Act, the Area Learning Centers and Alternative Programs Act), the new idea attracted more and more district support and student participation. Eventually, the governor signed the K–12 Mandatory Enrollment Options Act (1988) that required every school district to release students to attend public schools in any district by 1990–1991. The new idea of public school choice, through successive legislative sessions, eventually survived the innovation process and was accepted into Minnesota public practice.

Team Entrepreneurship

Team entrepreneurship was evident in this case when all six public entrepreneurs moved the new idea of public school choice through each phase of the policy

innovation process. Their creative, intellectual activities marked the initiation phase when the new idea was borrowed and adapted from other policy domains. They had argued that choice in education would create a market for educational services just as choice had created a market for transportation and telecommunication services. By freeing students from a school district's monopoly control, students would be allowed to take their state educational dollars to whatever district they believed would meet their needs. Districts, hoping to retain students, would have an incentive to improve or face declining enrollments. Thus, competition was expected to be the means to eliminate the performance gaps in education without the need to spend more money, and at the same time, improve services as it had in other deregulated industries.

Interested in spreading their new idea as widely as possible, public entrepreneurs used many different vehicles to disseminate their ideas. They wrote books, position papers, journal and newspaper articles, and even helped draft speeches for politicians. They appeared as guests on local and national radio television programs, and in one case, served as host of a local television public affairs program. The public entrepreneurs also formed a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation called Public School Incentive (PSI) that operated as a test bed for high-profile ideas and demonstration projects. To fund such ventures, PSI became the fiscal agent for foundations willing to give money to support innovative projects in education, attracting over a million dollars in contributions. The public entrepreneurs also cultivated bureaucratic insiders who would be needed during the important design phase when their ideas would be vulnerable to the vagaries of the legislative process. They also were instrumental in getting a change-oriented commissioner of education appointed, and developed key contacts and policy advocates within the department who later were successful in protecting the fledgling idea through the tumultuous legislative process and the labor-intensive steps of implementation and evaluation. They also collaborated on major studies on Minnesota public education with high-profile groups such as the Citizens League and the Minnesota Business Partnership, both of which issued reports endorsing their new ideas and public school choice. And finally, during the new idea's incubation period, they were successful in attracting the attention of the governor who became the idea's major policy champion when he introduced public school choice to the legislature in 1985.

As the new idea moved from the more quiet deliberations of the initiation phase to the divisive politics of the design phase, the public entrepreneurs shaped their grand strategy and vision of the future by using tactical strategies and action heuristics to meet the evolving political realities. They worked with the governor and his staff in a number of ways: to enlist other policy champions in the legislature; to attract additional support from groups such as the PTA and the League of Women Voters; to cultivate "thought leaders" or "big name types," such as the CEO of 3M, in order to add credibility to the new idea; and to build a grassroots group—People for Better Schools—to shore up the legislative campaign. Their lobby efforts were developed in almost textbook fashion as they drew in a wide range of supporters, even traditional educators, to give legitimacy to the idea of public school choice. Working diligently to get and keep press coverage of the new idea,

the public entrepreneurs eventually were successful in attracting public awareness and winning its support.

After the new idea became law, the challenges of the implementation process began. As outsiders to education, and without formal positions in government, the public entrepreneurs had no formal authority to oversee or intervene into the implementation process. The new law was now on educator's turf in the school districts. Fortunately their close ties with the commissioner of education and the bureaucratic insiders, cultivated over the years, opened up some opportunities. When the department of education needed help in informing the schools and the public about the new open enrollment program, the public entrepreneurs were there to help with the mass mailings. When implementation was not going as smoothly as hoped, the public entrepreneurs organized student participants in the open enrollment program to testify before the legislature. By all accounts, their testimony and lobbying efforts were responsible for reversing some lawmakers' opinions on school choice and preventing the law from being gutted or repealed. When lawmakers neglected to provide funding for evaluation, the public entrepreneurs called contacts at the U.S. Department of Education for low-cost evaluation assistance. Several entrepreneurs were even appointed by the commissioner to participate in the first evaluation task force, and from this vantage point, were able to design, oversee, and evaluate the statewide implementation of open enrollment. Thus, even through the difficult phase of the implementation process, we documented the collective efforts of the six public entrepreneurs.

Functional Entrepreneurship

Functional entrepreneurship was also evident in this case. *Policy intellectuals* joined with the public entrepreneurs during the initiation phase to develop ideas and frame educational problems in such a way that public choice became a much more viable policy alternative to educators' solution of pumping more money into the existing educational system. *Policy advocates* were instrumental in linking the intellectuals and *policy champions* such as Governor Perpich and key legislators, who defended the idea during the political debates and carried the public school choice idea through to legislative enactment. *Policy administrators*, such as Commissioner Randall and other bureaucratic insiders, testified on behalf of the idea during the legislative hearings, even convening educators to discuss how to implement public school choice before the idea was introduced into the legislature. Beyond that, administrators played key roles in ensuring that the idea got fair treatment through the critical implementation and evaluation phases when opponents launched efforts to undermine it. Close contact among the functional experts and the public entrepreneurs eventually built a wide base of support and afforded protection for the new idea as it moved through time.

DISCUSSION

Collective entrepreneurship, whether in the form of team entrepreneurship or functional entrepreneurship, has a number of advantages over the sole entrepreneur working independently. A single individual, no matter how talented, has a difficult

time matching the multiple capabilities of a group of people who pool their skills, talents, and resources in pursuit of a common vision. As one public entrepreneur noted, "no one person has all the requisite skills or resources needed to engage in such a large-scale policy change and we need each other to distribute the workload." Team entrepreneurship enables the group to draw on the specialized skills of each member. As another commented: "some people can do certain things that other people can't do. . . . I mean, some people can write. Some people can talk to politicians better than other people can . . . or some people have status that other people haven't got." Thus, some entrepreneurs wrote proposals, others concentrated on developing strategies for change, and still others focused their energies on the legislative process, building interest group support and lobbying the legislature. One of the reasons they believed that their new idea managed to survive the trials of the innovation process was that "there were enough of us doing it. . . . There was nearly always somebody pushing it. . . . You know there was always somebody turning some dial or turning some lever or talking to somebody. And if you didn't like what we were doing, it probably seemed like we were busier than we were."

Also, because most of the public entrepreneurs had full-time jobs outside of their policy interests in education, one additional advantage was that they could serve as back-up to one another should their regular work schedules conflict with their entrepreneurship. However, it was well understood that if a member faced job-related time constraints, he still was expected to do something to aid the overall innovation effort. It was acceptable, for example, to attend meetings, offer one's views, but leave the day-to-day follow-up to those with more time to devote to entrepreneurial activities.

Team entrepreneurship also offered the advantage of an extended resource base. Each team member drew on a unique set of organizational contacts, and taken together, they offered an impressive constellation of organizational support, far more extensive than what a single individual was likely to have amassed in the same amount of time. As one noted, they had "enough knowledge to connect with anything worth getting at elsewhere in the country . . . contacts with people and familiarity with projects under way." This *organizational multiplier effect* had several benefits. Rather than attending functions and activities as a team of like-minded change agents, they justifiably could claim to represent many different groups in the community. That tactic worked especially well when they were asked to send representatives to various policymaking sessions in the legislature or in the community. Rather than one small group of people doing battle with entrenched interests, they came as separate individuals representing different, well-known organizations that increased their visibility and added more credibility to their ideas.

Their extensive network of contacts also made it easier to attract resources for research and demonstration projects. Money from the Northwest Foundation funded a project to test the concepts of school-site management and teachers in private practice. And the money from the McKnight Foundation permitted one entrepreneur to revise a book on educational reform. Their close association with the Citizens League opened up opportunities to participate in study teams, one of which advocated of public school choice as a way to break the monopoly of the traditional school bureaucracy. Their contacts with the Minnesota Business Partnership

enabled them to influence a major study of education that recommended public school choice to foster innovation and change in the schools without raising taxes and passing a host of new legislation. Most team members also could count on indirect support from their employers in the form of secretarial services, mail, phone, and copying privileges, and occasionally, money for research assistance. Although employers did not allocate specific budgets for innovative activities, they did allow significant flexibility in their employees' work schedules so the entrepreneurs had some time to pursue their goals of educational reform. Thus, there existed a very rich base of community resources on which the public entrepreneurs could draw. Without its existence and munificence, it would have been difficult to build let alone maintain the momentum for the idea given its formidable opposition.

There is one more important advantage that collective entrepreneurship has over individual entrepreneurship. We know that innovative ideas can be incremental or radical in nature, meaning that they can vary incrementally or they can radically differ from current practice (Roberts and King, 1996). It is likely that the more radical the idea, the greater resistance there will be to it. The reasoning is straightforward. By definition, people lack familiarity with a radical idea and how it might work in practice. The more alien or different it appears to them, the more likely they are to be skeptical about it or reject it outright. The more objections they mount to the idea, the harder entrepreneurs have to work to counter and overcome the resistance. Entrepreneurs who want to keep pushing their new idea forward are forced to expand their base of operations: build a larger coalition of support, seek additional resources, and develop new strategies and tactics. Resistance forces them to respond with an expanded set of activities and countermeasures. Because it is less likely that a single entrepreneur could shoulder this burden alone, we expect to find entrepreneurs who support radical ideas joining forces to work with others either as a team of public entrepreneurs or a collective of functional experts. This certainly was the case in Minnesota. The public entrepreneurs established a nonprofit corporation to provide a test bed for demonstration projects, went to great lengths to disseminate ideas, lobbied the legislature, and worked with the media. They conducted these activities as a team and in concert with the policy champions, administrators, and evaluators who also supported the idea of school choice. The time and resource demands would have made it very difficult, if not impossible, for one of them to undertake these activities by himself. There was an advantage in working together.

On the other hand, collective entrepreneurship can have its disadvantages. Time and effort is required to build a team and develop an identity, structure, and norms for day-to-day operations. Leadership and coordination of member activities must never be taken for granted. Someone has to call meetings, prepare agendas, keep people up-to-date on the latest developments, prepare whatever written documentation is required, develop plans, and craft strategies to meet the changing political climate, and coordinate with those who share similar policy objectives. And teams have to prepare for conflicts, especially those committed to policy changes that likely attract people holding different ideological and political views. In the case of the Minnesota public entrepreneurs, there were conflicts over legislative priorities because each entrepreneur had a different constituency and each came

with his own personal preference. Some were associated with the Minnesota Business Partnership and advocated greater accountability through statewide tests and measurement of student performance. Others favored policies that promoted access and equity for children at risk due to the social problems of poverty, unemployment, and dysfunctional families. Conflicts also surfaced about the nature of change—how fast to change and whether to compromise or hold out for one's policy objectives. Unless an entrepreneurial team can work through its differences and establish a consensus on priorities, it risks losing the advantages that collective entrepreneurship affords them. Entrepreneurial teams unable to surmount their ideological, political, and personal differences ultimately will divert attention from the innovative idea and create opportunities for the opposition to exploit. In the case of the Minnesota public entrepreneurs, they believed they were successful because they avoided direct confrontations and showdowns, and worked instead to accommodate their individual differences. They were able to suspend "major egos to work together" and were able to agree that there were some things that could be done differently to accommodate individual preferences. When all else failed, they "agreed to disagree."

CONCLUSION

In our age of skepticism and distrust of government, the image of the lone entrepreneur fighting single-handedly against all odds to transform public policy and reinvent public management has romantic appeal. We want to believe that a creative, inventive individual can make a difference. Belief in this heroic model of entrepreneurship, however, is becoming more difficult to sustain in our complex, interdependent world. The likelihood that any one person has the skills, resources, time, and stamina to launch an entrepreneurial venture on his own begs credulity, especially when the idea is a radical one that provokes an enormous amount of resistance from the public, politicians, and the policy community. Rarely do we find public entrepreneurs capable of "going it alone," if they ever did. The world of public sector innovation, especially in a complex intergovernmental system, calls for sharing ideas and power with others to get anything done (Bryson and Einsweiler, 1991; Roberts, 1991). We find a compelling logic in collective rather than individual public entrepreneurship.

This article has introduced two forms of collective entrepreneurship. Team entrepreneurship pools the talents of multiple entrepreneurs who find advantage in working together through all phases of the innovation process. Functional entrepreneurship links specialists, who, working from their vantage point of expertise, hand off a new idea from one specialist to another to keep the new idea flowing and developing over time. The policy intellectual invents, adapts, or borrows the idea from other contexts and offers it as a new solution to problems in a policy domain. The policy champion joins the effort and uses her resources, credibility, and power to back the new idea and press for its acceptance in law, statute, or policy before a legislature or oversight group. The policy implementer takes up the cause and confronts the resistance, or at least inertia, when the new idea, in law, statute, or policy, is implemented in practice and old operating procedures are replaced with

new administrative routines. As is predicted for team entrepreneurship, the greater the coordination among all functional experts, the greater the likelihood the new idea will survive to be a full-blown policy innovation.

The case study of public school choice in Minnesota illustrates both forms of collective entrepreneurship in practice. Each appears to be a viable route to innovation. Each also demonstrates how important the larger interorganizational domain is for creativity and the incubation of new ideas. Even collective entrepreneurship, despite its advantages over individual entrepreneurship, does not exist in a vacuum. The Minnesota case illustrates how important the linkages are between the public entrepreneurs and the larger community. Without the network of community resources, it would have been very difficult to sustain momentum for the idea of public school choice. The idea's survival and development depended on the infrastructure that surrounded it. An "ecology of organizations" provided the critical "venture capital" for issue analysis and experimentation. Organizations such as the Citizens League of Minneapolis and the Minnesota Business Partnership were "catalysts" and "incubators" for innovative agendas (Roberts and King, 1996). The public entrepreneurs as a team and as a constellation of functional experts benefited greatly from working in an environment that was resource munificent.

Yet there was more to their social creativity than economic capital. The public entrepreneurs were successful to a large extent because they were able to manage their internal team dynamics. Even though they were a collection of people from different ideological perspectives, they did not allow their differences to distract them from their common vision. The deft management of their internal relationships not only facilitated their working together, but it attracted an even wider base of supporters who normally would not have joined forces. The extensive relational network of contacts and associations, which the public entrepreneurs eventually pulled together from throughout the state and the nation, created a very important form of social capital just as important as the community's economic capital. Both forms of capital were instrumental in bringing about the radical policy change of public school choice. Thus, from the Minnesota public entrepreneurs, we learn how important the social aspects of creativity are, both in terms of community resource support, and in terms of the social dynamics and relationships that underpin all forms of collective entrepreneurship.

NOTES

1. Innovation phases do not imply a sequential logic in the idea's trajectory. We know for example that the more novel an innovative idea, the more overlap there tends to be among the phases. What this means in practice is that when people work on highly original, innovative ideas, they may be engaged in both initiation and design or design and implementation at the same time.
2. The phases of the innovation process describe innovation in global terms, stating the necessary conditions for innovation to occur. If a new idea is not created, designed, and implemented, it will not be able to attain the developed status we attribute to an innovation. In contrast, public entrepreneurs can go through a much messier process that follows no predetermined set of activities. As Kingdon reminds us, "events do not proceed neatly in stages, steps, or phases . . . Participants do not first identify problems and then seek solutions for them; indeed, advocacy of solutions often precedes the highlighting of problems to which they become attached" (Kingdon, 1984, p. 215). In fact, some would advocate this messiness, by encouraging public entrepreneurs to work

implementation issues while they are creating and designing new policy (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973).

3. These two forms of collective entrepreneurship (team and functional) are sometimes difficult to distinguish in the field. Longitudinal studies are necessary to separate functional experts who are activated at certain stages of the innovation process and entrepreneurial teams who work collaboratively through all stages of the policy innovation process.

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